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# UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No. 862.2868

First Named Inventor or Application Identifier

KENTARO YANO, ET AL.

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## APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

## ADDRESS TO:

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
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Washington, DC 20231

1. ☒ Fee Transmittal Form  
(Submit an original, and a duplicate for fee processing)

2. ☒ Specification Total Pages 48

3. ☒ Drawings (35 USC 113) Total Sheets 10

4. ☒ Oath or Declaration Total Pages 2

a. ☒ Newly executed (original or copy)

b. ☐ Unexecuted for information purposes

c. ☐ Copy from a prior application (37 CFR 1.63(d))  
(for continuation/divisional with Box 17 completed)  
[Note Box 5 below]

i. ☐ **DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)**  
Signed Statement attached deleting inventor(s)  
named in the prior application, see 37 CFR  
1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).

5. ☐ Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4c is checked)  
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the  
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part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby  
incorporated by reference therein.

6. ☐ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)

7. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission  
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## ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

8. ☒ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))

9. ☐ 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement ☐ Power of Attorney  
(when there is an assignee)

10. ☐ English Translation Document (if applicable)

11. ☐ Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 ☐ Copies of IDS  
Citations

12. ☐ Preliminary Amendment

13. ☒ Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503)  
(Should be specifically itemized)

14. ☐ Small Entity Statement(s) ☐ Statement filed in prior application  
Status still proper and desired

15. ☐ Certified Copy of Priority Document(s)  
(if foreign priority is claimed)

16. ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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17. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:

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CLAIMS	(1) FOR	(2) NUMBER FILED	(3) NUMBER EXTRA	(4) RATE	(5) CALCULATIONS
	TOTAL CLAIMS (37 CFR 1.16(c))	7-20 =	0	X \$ 18.00 =	\$0
	INDEPENDENT CLAIMS (37 cfr 1.16(b))	2-3 =	0	X \$ 78.00 =	\$0
	MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIMS (if applicable) (37 CFR 1.16(d))			\$260.00 =	\$0
				BASIC FEE (37 CFR 1.16(a))	\$760.00
	Total of above Calculations =				\$760.00
	Reduction by 50% for filing by small entity (Note 37 CFR 1.9, 1.27, 1.28).				
	TOTAL =				\$760.00

19. Small entity status

- a. ☐ A Small entity statement is enclosed
- b. ☐ A small entity statement was filed in the prior nonprovisional application and such status is still proper and desired.
- c. ☐ Is no longer claimed.

20. ☒ A check in the amount of \$ 760.00 to cover the filing fee is enclosed.

21. ☒ A check in the amount of \$ 40.00 to cover the recordal fee is enclosed.

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- a. ☒ Fees required under 37 CFR 1.16.
- b. ☒ Fees required under 37 CFR 1.17.
- c. ☐ Fees required under 37 CFR 1.18.

**SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT, ATTORNEY, OR AGENT REQUIRED**

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SIGNATURE	<i>Abigail Cousins</i>
DATE	June 11, 1999

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

QUANTIZATION METHOD, AND RECORDING APPARATUS AND STORAGE  
MEDIUM USING THE SAME

5

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

003310305440  
The present invention relates to a quantization method  
in which quantization processing is applied to data for first  
10 and second recording means which record input image data in  
a plurality of gradations which belong to each of different  
gradations in almost the same hue and a recording apparatus  
and a storage medium using the method.

In recent years, office automation equipment such as  
15 a personal computer, a word processor or the like has come  
into widespread use. As a system for printing out  
information which is inputted by the equipment, various kinds  
of recording systems such as an ink-jet system, an  
eletrophotographic system, a wire-dot system and or like  
20 system have been developed. In these recording systems, a  
binary recording system is now mainstream, in which an image  
is expressed by whether or not a dot (an image pixel) is  
recorded on a storage medium such as paper. On the other hand,  
capabilities of a personal computer and word processor have  
25 been increased with the result that a photographic image and  
a desk top publishing image are ordinarily output. Therefore,

realization of a smooth halftone image expression has strongly been desired.

A typical method in which a halftone image is expressed with a binary recording apparatus is disclosed in "A Binary  
5 Expression of a High/Low Density Image by the Dither Method" in NIKKEI ELECTRONICS, 1978. 5. 1, pp. 50 to 65. This is an expression method called "the dither method." The dither method can be classified into two methods: "a systematic dither method" and "a conditional decision method" based on  
10 a feature of quantization. The two dither methods will be described below in a simple manner.

In the systematic dither method, a unit matrix is first determined and a gradation expression can be generated by changing the number of pixels which are recorded in the matrix.  
15 For example, when a unit matrix of  $4 \times 4$  is used, gradation with 17 steps can be expressed by controlling pixels to be recorded in the unit matrix in number from 0 dot to 16 dots. The systematic dither method can perform a high speed processing in a simple manner as compared with the  
20 conditional decision method but a regenerated image looks like a rough texture and is not suitable for attaining a natural image with photographic gradation.

In recent years, there has been appeared a quantization technique in which, as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,111,310,  
25 a dither matrix with a sufficient scale is used and a pattern showing a spatial frequency characteristic called blue noise

is assigned to the matrix. Regeneration of a visually excellent halftone can be attained while the high speed processing characteristic of the conventional dither method is retained since processing in quantization is equal to the  
5 conventional dither method (hereinafter referred to as blue noise dither method).

The blue noise dither method is a quantization method whereby a noise sense in an output image is visually suppressed by restricting a power spectrum of a low-frequency  
10 component to which the human eye is sensitive.

On the other hand, as the conditional decision method, there has been known the error diffusion (ED) method. The principle of this binary quantization method is disclosed in R. W. Floyd and L. Steinberg, "An Adaptive Algorithm for  
15 Spatial Gray Scale" SID 75 Digest (1976). The binary quantization method is a gradation expression method in which differences (error data) between pixel densities of an original image and those of a recording image recorded by a recording apparatus are calculated, peripheral pixels  
20 before the quantization are applied with specific weights and the error data, which is a calculation result, are quantized while the data are dispersed. In other words, this is a system in which quantization errors for pixels are quantized while the errors are propagated to unquantized  
25 pixels. Hence, the ED method is complex and not suitable for high speed processing. However, the processing is a method

which is most generally used as quantization means which faithfully regenerates a halftone image with photographic gradation since densities of an original image can be preserved or the like.

5        These dither method and error diffusion method are used not only to quantize a multi-value original pixel to a binary coded data but to quantize a multi-value original pixel to an n-value quantization level (n-value quantization), where n is more than 3.

10        As an n-value quantization method of the systematic dither method, there is available a density pattern method. In this quantization method, the number of output (recording) pixels is defined according to a level of an input pixel and one pixel is expressed in plurality of gradations in a binary  
15        recording apparatus. For example, in the method, when an input pixel is 8 bit data (256 gradations), the input pixel data are quantized into 16 gradations for each of 16 levels and thereby an output pattern is recorded in a one to one correspondence to the input pixel levels. There are  
20        available methods for recording in 16 gradations according to a variety of developments: one is to arrange recording dots at different recording positions respectively, another is to superpose recording pixels at the same recording position and still another is to superpose recording pixels  
25        only at some recording positions. Furthermore, a plurality of dither matrices are prepared in advance and one input pixel

is evaluated in a plurality of times (the number of times corresponding to the number of dither matrices set) and thereby the number of times of recording at the pixel position is determined.

5           As an example of the n-value quantization in the conditional decision method, there has been known an n-value error diffusion method in which at least 3 thresholds as shown in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 08-32805 are set and error diffusion processing is performed.

10           In this way, various methods have been studied and disclosed as quantization methods, in which a multi-value input level is quantized to an output level for a recording apparatus.

On the other hand, there are also available a plurality  
15 of systems as a recording apparatus for recording using recording data which are quantized using the various system described above. Recording apparatuses have been developed in which recording dots which can regenerate a plurality of gradations are formed, for example: a high/low density  
20 recording system in which a halftone expression is effected by combination of a high density dot obtained by forming a pixel with dark ink and a low density dot obtained by forming a pixel with light ink of a low density in almost the same hue, a large/small dot recording system in which a halftone  
25 expression is effected by forming recording pixels through modulation in size of a recording dot and a large/small dot,

high/low density system which is combination of both recording systems.

Recording resolution has constantly been improved to a higher degree in order to regenerate halftone expression with high fidelity and thereby progress has been attained in realization of a high quality image by recording pixels.

However, a quantization method and a recording apparatus which have heretofore been used in a conventional way for a high quality image has the following inconvenience.

When the conventional 3-value quantization method is used for quantization in high/low density recording, there are chances when rough texture or a pseudo-contour arises in gradation of an output image. The 3-value quantization method is to quantize one pixel of an input image data into 3-value information comprising 0, 1, 2, wherein 0 corresponds to a pixel which is not printed, 1 corresponds to a pixel which is printed as a dot with light ink and 2 corresponds to a pixel which is printed with dark ink.

Here, a human generally recognizes an image which is subjected to filtering which depends on a spatial frequency characteristic of an object image which is explained as an MTF of the visual system. Accordingly, for example, when an image in gradations ranged from a low level to a high level is recorded using the 3-value error diffusion method, high density dots are printed after all pixels at a gradation level are printed with low density recording dots in a low density



100 % duty cycle. When a recording apparatus with a resolution of the order of 300 DPI or 600 DPI is assumed to be used, almost all components constituting an image are of DC just before a low density print duty grows to 100 % and  
5 an image is in a state in which a contrast between dots cannot be recognized. As a result, a very smooth image with less of granularity can be expressed though the recording is a binary-coded one. When an input gradation value is increased and high density dots begin to be mixed into low density dots  
10 in order to raise a density further, since high density dots are only very sporadically dispersed in a first period, a spatial frequency shows a low frequency characteristic which is very sensitive to the visual characteristic of a human. That is, an image which has been recognized as visually very  
15 smooth is rapidly changed over to an image which is rich in granularity accompanying a rough sense. At this point, even if a density characteristic of an output image is transited so as to be almost equal to a gradation value of an input image, a contour comes to be sensed in an output image by  
20 a drastic change in granularity on the image. This is one of major causes for a pseudo-contour which is problematic in a high/low density image.

This phenomenon can be explained based on a way in which a RMS granularity of a recording image which is recorded for  
25 each input gradation level is changed. The RMS granularity is a general technique to quantify a granularity sense of

an image, but a RMS granularity is drastically changed during transition of gradation with a smooth sense of granularity in the conventional 3-value quantization method. This drastic change in granularity is visually recognized as a pseudo-contour.

In this way, in the case of the high/low density recording, image disorder arises easily compared with the case of the binary recording. For a measure against such an image disorder, if high density recording data and low density recording data are subjected to separate quantization processes (hereinafter referred to as separate plane processing), transition between high density recording dots and low density recording dots as well as the state of granularity can be controlled and occurrence of such a pseudo-contour which is caused by a recording dot pattern can be suppressed, for example, in the same way as the case where separate quantization processes are respectively applied for generation of quantization recording data in different colors.

However, a high/low density recording apparatus is one which is desired to output a high quality image with photographic gradation. Therefore, the recording apparatus is naturally required to process a plurality of color data different in hues with high recording resolution. A load is too much for the separate plane processing to be properly operated. Especially, when a high density recording dot and



of the input image data (hereinafter referred to as first quantization step);

performing quantization of the image data input for the second recording means to data with a lower level than that  
5 of the input image data (hereinafter referred to as second quantization step), wherein

at least one of the first and second quantization steps performs quantization of the input image data to multi-value data with 3 or more levels, so that the corresponding one  
10 of the first and second recording means may record the image in a plurality of gradations.

The present invention is directed to a recording apparatus which includes first and second recording means which record input image data in a plurality of gradations  
15 which belong to each of different gradations in almost the same hue, comprising:

input means for inputting multi-value level image data;  
first quantization means for performing quantization of the image data input for the first recording means to a  
20 data with a lower level than that of the input image data;  
and

second quantization means for performing quantization of the image data input for the second recording means to a data with a lower level than that of the input image data,  
25 wherein

the first and second recording means record the input image data respectively in first and second gradations according to a quantization result from the first quantization means, at least one of the first and second  
5 quantization means performs quantization of the input image data to multi-value data with 3 or more levels and the corresponding one of the first and second recording means record the image in a plurality of gradations.

The present invention is directed to a storage medium  
10 from which a computer can read out a control program which is used for performing quantization of data for first and second recording means which record input image data in a plurality of gradations which belong to each of different gradations in almost the same hue, comprising:

15 a first quantization step module for performing quantization of the image data input for the first recording means to data with a lower level than that of the input image data;

a second quantization step module for performing  
20 quantization of the image data input for the second recording means to data with a lower level than that of the input image data; and

an output step module for outputting results from the first and second quantization steps, wherein

25 one of the first and second quantization step modules perform quantization of the input image data to multi-value

data with 3 or more levels so that the corresponding one of the first and second recording means may record the image in a plurality of gradations.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a view for illustrating a quantization method in an embodiment according to the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing a relation between a host computer and a recording apparatus;

Fig. 3 is a perspective view showing a mechanism of a main part of the recording apparatus;

Fig. 4 is a block diagram showing construction of the recording apparatus;

Fig. 5 is a view illustrating a flow of image processing;

Fig. 6A and 6B are graphs showing relations between an input gradation value and a quantization level of each of high/low density planes;

Fig. 7 is a table showing a relation between a quantization level and a print density level;

Fig. 8 is a view showing a line table in diffusion of error generated by quantization;

Fig. 9 is a graph for illustrating a rapid change in granularity at a boundary between light ink and dark ink; and

Fig. 10 is a control flow chart executed in quantization processing in the embodiment.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Quantization processing in an embodiment is used for a recording apparatus in which a recording in primary color gradations, such as high/low density recording, large/small dot recording and large/small, high/low density recording, or the like is performed using recording pixels in a plurality of gradations. The quantization method uses quantization means for separately performing quantization of input data input for a plurality of recording means which respectively record pixels with different gradation levels, and at least two of the plurality of the recording means have an overlapping recording region in which at least two recording means perform gradation recording in a duplicated manner and have quantization means for performing quantization so that the at least two recording means have a gradation recording region in which at least two recording means raise recording levels, in the overlapping recording region. By performing recording of data which is quantized by the quantization method, each of the recording means can arrange recording

pixels in a mutually independent and most suitable manner. For example, regeneration of visually smooth gradation at a boundary between a low density recording area to a high density recording area can be realized.

5 By using quantization means for performing quantization of data in each of the independent planes to n-value data, quantization being independently performed in each of the independent planes, regeneration of halftone corresponding to record resolution becomes possible by image processing  
10 corresponding to lower resolution than the recording resolution. With the quantization processing of the embodiment, image processing means can be provided by which the number of man-days required for all the image processing is greatly decreased.

15 As mentioned above, by using quantization means to perform quantization independently in each of recording means separately from each other or one another and n-value quantization means in each quantization, there can be realized a quantization method by which a halftone image with  
20 a high quality can be regenerated at a high speed in a recording apparatus which can record recording pixels in a plurality of gradations and a recording apparatus using the quantization method.

[First Embodiment]

25 The first embodiment will be described in a concrete manner with reference to the accompanying drawings.





3 and a second transport roller pair 4 in a direction of an arrow A, which are disposed mutually spaced at a distance from each other, and which are respectively driven by stepping motors (not shown).

- 5 Marks 5a to 5d indicate recording heads of an ink-jet type for performing recording on the recording sheet 1. In the figure, 5a is a recording head for spouting cyan based ink, which can shoot ink dots in dark and light cyan. As in the same way as the cyan based ink, 5b is a recording head for recording a dark magenta dot and a light magenta dot, 5c is a recording head for recording a dark yellow dot and a light yellow dot and 5d is a recording head for recording a dark black dot and a light black dot. In addition, the recording heads 5a to 5d each can perform large/small dot recording with a single nozzle, while selectively forming a large dot or a small dot. The inks are respectively supplied to the recording heads from ink cartridges, not shown, and spouted through the nozzles according to an image signal. There are publicly known techniques, in which one recording head is constructed from a plurality of nozzles and the nozzles are divided into groups, so that different inks are respectively spouted from the groups of nozzles to form recording dots, and in which dots different in volume are spouted from a single nozzle, and detailed description thereon is not given here.
- 25

The recording heads 5a to 5d and ink cartridges are mounted on a carriage 6 and the carriage 6 are connected to a carriage motor 23 by way of a belt 7 and pulleys 8a, 8b interposed therebetween. Accordingly, by drive of the carriage motor 23, the carriage 6 reciprocates along a guide shaft 9 for scanning.

With the above described construction, the recording heads 5a to 5d record an ink image by spouting ink on the recording sheet 1 according to an image signal while moving in an arrow B direction. The recording heads 5a to 5d return to a home position when a necessity arises in order to eliminate clogging in a nozzle by an ink recovery unit and at the same time, the recording sheet 1 is advanced by a distance corresponding to one line space in the arrow A direction by drive of the transport roller pair 3, 4. By repeating such a series of actions, predetermined recording is performed on the recording sheet 1.

Then, a control system for driving constituent members of the recording apparatus will be described.

The control system, as shown in Fig. 4, comprises: for example, a control section 20 which is provided with a CPU 20a such as a microprocessor or the like, an ROM 20b in which a control program for the CPU 20a and various kinds of data are stored, and an RAM 20c which is used as not only a work area for the CPU 20a, but for a temporary storage of various kinds of data such as recording image data; an interface 21;

an operator control panel 22; a driver 27 for driving various kinds of motors (a carriage drive motor 23, a paper feed roller drive motor 24, a first transport roller pair drive motor 25 and a second transport roller pair drive motor 26); and  
5 driver 28 for driving a recording head.

The control section 20 performs I/O (input/output of information) of various kinds of information (for example, a character pitch, a kind of character or the like) from the operator control panel 22 and an image signal to and from  
10 an external apparatus 29 by way of the interface 21. The control section 20 further outputs an ON or OFF signal for driving the motors 23 to 26, and an image signal for driving the constituent members.

#### <Outlines of Image Processing>

15 Then, there will be described an image processing method which is used when recording data with which recording is performed in the recording apparatus are generated in the host computer.

Fig. 5 is an image processing flow in which 8 bit (256  
20 gradations) image data respectively in RGB colors as input are converted to 2 bit information respectively in 8 planes including 2 bit data for dark ink image respectively in CMYK colors and 2 bit data for light ink image in C'M'Y'K' colors for output.

25 The processing is performed in the host computer 201.

The 8 bit data respectively in RGB colors are converted to 8 bit data respectively in CMY colors in a brightness/density conversion block 501. In the embodiment, a log conversion described below is performed.

5  $C0 = (-255/2.4) * (\log_{10} [R/255])$

$$M0 = (-255/2.4) * (\log_{10} [G/255])$$

$$Y0 = (-255/2.4) * (\log_{10} [B/255])$$

Then, the 8 bit data respectively in C0, M0 and Y0 are subjected to masking conversion for color space conversion by a masking block. In the embodiment, input CMY data are subjected to matrix transformation in  $[3 \times 3]$ , thereby outputting 8 bit data respectively in C1, M1 and Y1.

Then, UCR/BG processing for black generation is performed. In the UCR/BG processing, under color removal and black generation are performed and 8 bit data respectively in C1, M1 and Y1 colors are converted to 8 bit data respectively in C2, M2, Y2 and K colors. In a concrete manner, the minimum values  $uc$  ( $uc = \min [CMY]$ ) of the recording data respectively in C1, M1 and Y1 are used as under colors and then the C1, M1 and Y1 colors are partly removed by the under colors. The C2, M2, Y2 and K are generated by adding black generation components to the C1, M1, Y1 and K colors according to the minimum values  $uc$  which have been removed.

$$C2 = C1 - uc + CGR [uc]$$

25  $M2 = M1 - uc + MGR [uc]$

$$Y2 = Y1 - uc + YGR [uc]$$

K = BGR [uc]

At this point, when CGR [uc], MGR [uc] and YGR [uc] are all nothing for all uc values, black generation is conducted only for a K ink image. When the CGR [uc], MGR [uc] and YGR [uc] have values corresponding to uc, part of black component which has been removed as an under color is expressed as K ink data and the other is expressed as a mixture of color components in C, M and Y (a composite Bk). However, in the embodiment, since light black ink is available, the under color removal and black generation processing is not necessarily required.

Thereafter, output  $\gamma$  correction is performed to complete color processing, thereby generating 8 bit data in C3, M3, Y3 and K3 colors.

Since the color processing completed data have 8 bit gradation levels and are still not converted to output levels for the recording apparatus, quantization processing in which the data are converted to the output levels is conducted. Since all the colors C, M, Y and K can respectively be recorded with a high density dot and a low density dot, the data in CMYK which have been subjected to color processing are to be further respectively applied to quantization processing in at least 2 times for the colors: quantization of the respective colors for high density pixel recording and quantization of the respective colors for low density pixel recording (a quantization method will be detailed later).

Besides, in the embodiment, since 3-value quantization for the colors is conducted in the embodiment, the data in CMYK, after the quantization processing is completed, are quantized to 2 bit information of quantized data respectively in C, M, Y and K for high density pixel recording; and 2 bit information of quantized data respectively in C', M', Y' and K' for low density pixel recording; and then the quantized data are transferred to the recording apparatus, whereby high/low density recording is effected.

<Details of Quantization>

The recording apparatus of the embodiment is a high/low density recording apparatus with a recording resolution of 600 DPI in both directions, longitudinal and lateral, and there arises a need for generating 28,800,000 pixels in recording on an A4 size (8 inches × 10 inches) paper in full. Hence, while there arise anxiety about that the number of mandays required for data processing is large and a pseudo-contour at a boundary between high/low density recording occurs, the problems are prevented from occurring by using a quantization method as will be described below.

Fig. 1 is a view illustrating a quantization method in which an input of 8 bit data is converted to an output of 5-value data for the recording apparatus. For example, the case of input data at a 150/255 gradation level will be described. The input level 150 is processed in high density recording quantization processing and low density recording

quantization processing separately. At this point, correspondence graphs for a gradation level vs. a quantization level are shown in Figs. 6A and 6B, wherein Fig. 6A is a graph for a quantization level corresponding to low density recording and Fig. 6B is a graph for a quantization level corresponding to high density recording. As is clear from Figs. 6A and 6B, quantization levels correspond to 3 values for each of the high/low density recording. In the low density recording, an output level 0 is set for an input from 0 to 21, an output level 1 for an input from 22 to 62, an output level 1 for an input from 63 to 170, an output level 2 for an input level from 171 to 200 and an output level 0 for an input level from 201 to 255. In the high density recording, in a similar manner, an output level 0 is set for an input from 0 to 62, an output level 1 for an input from 63 to 170, an output level 1 for an input level 171 to 200 and an output level 2 for an input level from 201 to 255. Recording levels of pixels are shown in Fig. 7. A recording dot of a kind corresponding to a quantization level 1 of a low density dot corresponds to recording to a density level 43, and a recording dot of a kind corresponding to a quantization level 2 of a low density dot corresponds to recording to a density level 85. A quantization level 1 of a high density dot corresponds to a density level 85 and a quantization level 2 of a high density dot corresponds to a density level 255. In Fig. 8, there is shown a relation



between peripheral unquantized pixels and their error propagation coefficients produced in quantization. An error generated in a pixel of a quantization object propagates to an unquantized pixel, rightward, adjacent to the object pixel at a propagation ratio  $129/256$  of the original error and error propagation from the object pixel is further effected to the unquantized pixels underlying the object pixel respectively at propagation ratios of  $70/256$ ,  $37/256$  and  $20/256$ .

Now, description will further be continued returning to Fig. 1. A gradation level of a pixel at a quantization object position in an input image is 150 and the level 150 is compared with quantization levels in density of Figs. 6. That is, output levels of low and high density pixels for input level 150 are respectively determined as 1 and 1. Then, errors of the high/low density pixels are respectively calculated. An output level of the low density pixel is shown as 43 and an output level of the high density pixel is shown as 85 respectively from Fig. 7. That is, since one pixel of a output level 43 and another pixel of an output level 85 are outputted to a position of a pixel with an input level 150, a pixel at a total of 128 level is outputted to the position of the pixel. The shortage, that is an quantization error shows + 22 in total. This means that recording with a shortage of 22 gradation levels is resulted at the pixel position. The error + 22 propagates according to Fig. 8. An

error of + 11 levels propagates to a position adjacent to the pixel position of quantization object at a ratio of 129/255 and pixels underlying the pixel of quantization object along the raster scanning course are respectively in a similar manner affected with propagated errors of + 6, + 3 and + 1, which changes input levels 150 of pixels of the original image to 161, 156, 153 and 151.

Multi-value levels of other pixels in the input image are converted to quantized levels which can be outputted for the output apparatus while errors are propagated.

In the quantization method in the embodiment, gradation values from 21 to 62 of 8 bit (0 to 255) of an input are regenerated as recording dots of light ink and gradation values from 201 to 255 are regenerated as recording dots of dark ink. Input gradation values from 62 to 200 are expressed by a mixture of high/low density dots. A region of gradation values from 62 to 169 is one in which recording levels of high/low density dots are both increased.

Then, an effect of smooth transition by the quantization at a boundary between high/low density recording will be described.

In the embodiment, the number of gradations of a dot which can be outputted by a recording apparatus is 5. That is, in the embodiment, 256 gradation values of an 8 bit input pixel are quantized to the 5 gradation information for the recording apparatus.

Fig. 9 is a graph illustrating a relation between a gradation value and an RMS granularity when a conventional 5-value ED quantization method is adopted. As can clearly be understood from Fig. 9, a sense of granularity of an image is rapidly changed at a gradation value A on the abscissa which corresponds to a boundary where high/low density dots are interchanged in recording. That is, when gradation values in the vicinity of the A value are regenerated in a conventional way, a change in the appearance of an image occurs in the vicinity of the A gradation value and the change is recognized as a pseudo-contour. Hence, in order to suppress such a image disorder, there arises a necessity that a sense of granularity is guaranteed to be in a smooth way changed over the regenerated region of all gradations. In the embodiment, as mentioned above, in a transition region of gradation, recording generated by low density pixels is overlapped by recording of high density pixels and recording levels of high/low density pixels are both increased in the overlapping region. While a recording density of low density pixels is raised with the result that a sense of granularity caused by low density pixels is rapidly decreased, a sense of granularity caused by participation of high density pixels is increased. Therefore, as a whole, a smooth transition from low density pixel recording to high density pixel recording can be realized with no chance when a rapid change in granularity is resulted. In calculation of the RMS



In step S3, it is discriminated which of quantization levels of Fig. 6A a level of the input data which has been  
10 subjected to error correction belongs to and a level of a high density dot is determined.

In step S4, it is discriminated which of levels of Fig. 6B a level of the input data which has been subjected to error correction belongs to and a level of a low density dot is determined.

In step S5, density levels in regeneration (Fig. 7) respectively corresponding to the high density dot level and the low density dot level which have been determined in steps S3, S4 are summed up and a actual density in regeneration of the pixel of attention is attained.

In step S6, a difference between the data which has been subjected to error correction in step S2 and a regeneration density of the pixel of attention which has been calculated in step S5 is obtained and the difference is used as error data. The error data are multiplied by a weight and stored in the memory 2012.

In step S7, a quantization result is outputted to the recording apparatus.

The above mentioned processing is continued till data processing of the last pixel is completed based on judgment of step S8.

While, in the embodiment, each of high/low density dots can respectively be expressed in 3 gradations and all the gradations which can be expressed by dots of high/low densities combined are 5 in number, as compared with the case where five plane processing is effected by corresponding to each 5 gradations, since two plane processing of high/low densities are effected with 3-value quantization processing in each plane as mentioned above, great decrease in mandays for the processing can be realized. While, in the embodiment, realization means for 3 value expression in each plane is realized by selectively providing a large dot or a small dot, a method in which the number of dots in use is controlled may naturally be used as the realization means.

The reason why multi-value quantization processing can be effected in the same plane without suffering image disorder in the embodiment is that the embodiment adopts a method in which a rapid change in RMS granularity does not occur in an image while selectively forming a large dot or a small dot at predetermined points even when multi-value quantization means is adopted.

While, in the embodiment, regeneration of gradations with dots in a plane is realized by selectively forming a large dot or a small dot as mentioned above, a method may be used in which the number of dots formed on an image at a basic resolution is changed, thereby regenerating dot gradations in a plane.

Besides, the embodiment can of course be applied to a system including a recording apparatus with a recording (basic) resolution of 600 DPI in which image processing is conducted at a pixel resolution corresponding to 300 DPI and pseudo-600 DPI recording is performed while each plane is subjected to 5 value-quantization. While, in the embodiment, the example in which high/low density levels are both subjected to 3-value quantization, the present invention can be applied to the case where at least one dot level is subjected to multi-value quantization.

In a recording apparatus which is provided with plural gradation pixel recording means for recording pixels in almost the same hue with plurality of gradations of at least two or more kinds such as dark/light ink recording, multi-sized dot recording or the like, there are provided with: separate plane quantization means for performing quantization in separate plane processing for each of plural gradation pixel recording means; n-value quantization means for further performing at least 3-value quantization of input information corresponding to at least one plane; overlapping

recording means in which at least two gradation pixel  
recording means of the plural gradation pixel recording means  
perform recording in an overlapping manner when gradations  
in a primary color are regenerated, thereby performing  
5 regeneration of gradations; and a gradation recording region  
which comprises an overlapping region in which the gradation  
pixel recording means both raise recording levels, whereby  
regeneration of smooth gradation can be realized at a high  
speed without inducing image disorder such as a pseudo-  
10 contour while not suffering a large processing load.

[Second Embodiment]

Then, an example in which a systematic dither method  
is used in a mixed manner will be described as the second  
embodiment.

15 While, in the previous embodiment, ED processing of a  
conditional method is adopted in quantization in both of  
planes, high and low densities, 2-value processing by a blue  
noise dither method, which is described in description of  
the prior art, is used in the second embodiment, for  
20 quantization of a low density plane. That is, light ink is  
subjected only to a recording control in whether or not a  
dot is formed.

A blue noise dither method used in the second embodiment  
is a quantization method in which a low spatial frequency  
25 component of a recording image is decreased and a high quality  
halftone image close to an image which is visually subjected



to an ED processing can be outputted, as mentioned above.  
(However, since a matrix generation method or more detailed  
features of the quantization method are disclosed in U.S.  
Pat. No. 5,111,310 which is above described and those are  
5 publicly known, more detailed description is omitted here.)  
The dither method is simple in construction compared with  
the ED method.

Accordingly, by using the blue noise dither method as  
a quantization method for a plane of a low density recording  
10 image, regeneration of a halftone image, which is visually  
preferable, can be realized without any increase in  
requirement for mandays in the processing and therefore such  
a method is suitable for means for regenerating an image with  
photographic gradation.

15 In addition, by adapting the systematic dither method  
to a low density image, a new effect can be expected.

Since the blue noise dither method is a quantization  
method which uses a mask as described above, a dot print ratio  
for each gradation can be controlled with ease. For example,  
20 when 8 bit gradation processing is performed with a dither  
mask size of  $256 \times 256$ , each mask is fundamentally assigned  
with 256 values each from 0 to 255 as evaluation values. This  
situation is same as in the case of the ED processing; the  
number of dots assigned to in a fixed area is determined  
25 according to a gradation value and, in the ED processing,  
too, the number of dots to be recorded, for example, in an

area of  $256 \times 256$  is increased by 256 dots on average for each time when a gradation level is raised by one gradation. Needless to say that an output gradation value is not always raised by one gradation according to an output  $\gamma$  correction

5 applied even when an input gradation value is raised by one gradation, but the number of output dots is not changed for increase or decrease in input gradation value of the minimum unit or there is no change in that dots are added for recording according to the number of processing bits.

- 10 In a recording apparatus which expresses gradation by areal gradation means in which a recording density is increased or decreased, one of places where a sense of granularity is most explicitly expressed is a place where a gradation value with the minimum unit is expressed, that
- 15 is a place in the vicinity of a site at which a gradation value of  $1/256$  is expressed in the embodiment, but in an 8 bit processing, it is required without fail whether no dot is shot in a unit area of  $256 \times 256$  or 256 dots are shot. If a control is adopted in which dots of a low gradation
- 20 portion where a sense of granularity is most conspicuously caused are more reduced in number, there arise a need for increase in the number of bits in processing. However, by adopting a blue noise dither method as a quantization method for the low gradation portion in which a sense of granularity
- 25 is most conspicuous, that is a quantization method for light ink recording, the number of dots to be assigned can be

controlled with ease. In the embodiment, a generation frequency of dots in the first 8 gradations, that is a generation frequency of dots each with a gradation value from 1 to 8 is decreased less than a generation frequency which is expected in a normal state, whereby a sense of granularity in a highlight portion is further decreased.

In a concrete manner, when a gradation value is indicated by  $n$  and the number of dots printed at a gradation value  $n$  is  $N_n$  in a  $256 \times 256$  dither mask with an 8 bit gradation,

10  $0 < n \leq 8 \rightarrow N_n = N(n-1) + 256 - 256/(2^n)$   
 $n = 9 \rightarrow N_9 = N_8 + 256$   
 $9 < n \leq 246 \rightarrow N_n = N(n-1) + 257$   
 $246 < n \leq 255 \rightarrow N_n = N(n-1) + 258$

(, wherein  $n$  is a natural number and  $N_0 = 0$ .)

15 That is, in a highlight portion, dots begin to be assigned in a relatively smaller number and a strain caused by the reason that dots in normal number are not assigned is absorbed over all the following gradations other than the first gradations.

20 Recording dots in most of the cases of a recording apparatus are set to be larger in size than actual recording dots corresponding to a resolution by 10 % to 20 %. In many cases, dots are set larger in size for a composite reason such as to absorb errors in recording. Accordingly, since  
25 an image is regenerated with a higher density than a desired one when recording is conducted with the number of dots

proportional to a gradation value, an image density is adjusted with the output  $\gamma$  correction applied.

From the viewpoint mentioned above, there is necessarily no need for recording with the number of dots correctly according to a gradation value, that is such a means is very effective for regenerating a halftone image visually having the highest quality, especially in a highlight portion or the like portion in terms of a comprehensive quality.

While, in the second embodiment, the case where quantization is performed in a 2 value dither method is described, needless to say that multi-value quantization is applicable as in the first embodiment. In this case, thresholds for a plurality of dither matrices are assigned to one input pixel, thereby performing multi-value quantization.

[Other Embodiments]

While, in the above described embodiments, quantization of a low density plane and quantization of a high density plane are both realized by ED (in the first embodiment) and a combination of dither and ED (the second embodiment), the quantization of the low density plane may of course be realized by ED and the quantization of the high density plane may be realized by dither. In the above described embodiments, a sense of granularity of an image at a site where dot recording gets started is attached with much importance and the dither method which has an advantage in

way of increase/decrease of dots in number, though there is a case where the method is inferior to ED in terms of spatial frequency, is used for quantization of a plane to express a low gradation portion, but in a system where, for example, light ink which is means for expressing a low gradation portion is sufficiently low in density and rather, a sense of granularity generated by high density dots is required to be attached with much importance, a dither method which has a spatial frequency characteristic represented by blue noise dither is adopted for a high density plane so that an image quality is improved.

While, in the above described embodiments, a plane in which a dark portion gradation is mainly expressed and a plane in which a light portion gradation is mainly expressed are described with limitation to high/low density dot recording, the present invention is not limited to the high/low density recording, but can also be applied to large/small dot recording. In addition, selection of planes is not limited to the case of high/low densities but may be of more sophistication than the segmentation of high/low densities.

According to the embodiments, in such manners, there are provided: a plurality of recording means in which recording pixels of almost the same hue can be recorded; separate plane quantization means for performing quantization processing in separate planes according to a kind of recording pixel (dot) which can be outputted;

quantization means for performing n-value quantization of a recording pixel in at least one plane; and quantization means having an expression region of gradation in which recording levels of recording means for mainly recording a highlight portion and recording means for mainly recording a dark portion are both raised when gradation in a primary color in almost the same hue is recorded using a plurality of recording means. Therefore, smooth regeneration of gradation can be realized at a high speed without inducing image disorders such as a pseudo-contour or the like while no large processing load is imposed in a recording apparatus in which recording in a plurality of gradation values such as high/low density recording, large/small dot recording or the like of one pixel can be performed.

- 15 In the above described embodiments, when especially one of ink-jet recording systems in which means for generating thermal energy as energy which is used for spouting ink (for example, electrothermal energy converter, laser light or the like) is provided and a change in a state of ink is caused  
20 by the thermal energy is used, finer, higher density recording can be achieved.

- Typical construction and a principle of such an ink-jet recording system which are disclosed, for example, in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,723,129 and 4,740,796 specifications as  
25 fundamental are preferably adopted. This system can be applied for both of an on-demand type and a continuous type

and especially in the case of the on-demand type, at least one drive signal for giving a rapid increase in temperature by which boiling of a film occurs according to recording information is applied to an electrothermal converter which is provided on a sheet or in a liquid pathway on or in which liquid (ink) is held, and with the application of the drive signal, thermal energy is generated by the electrothermal energy converter and film boiling is caused on a thermal action surface of a recording head with the result that a gas bubble is effectively formed in the liquid (ink) which bubble corresponds to the drive signal on a one to one basis. By growth or contraction of a bubble, the liquid (ink) is spouted through a spout opening to form at least one drop. When the drive signal is formed in the shape of a pulse, the growth/contraction of a bubble is properly effected in an instant manner and therefore, especially, spout of liquid (ink) which is excellent in response can be achieved with a preferable result.

As a drive signal in a pulse shape, ones as described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,463,359 and 4,345,262 specification are suited. When conditions described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,313,124 specification regarding an invention on a temperature rising rate of the thermal action surface are adopted, more excellent recording can be performed.

The present invention, as structure of a recording head, also includes a structure using U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,558,383 or

4,459,600 specification which discloses a structure in which a thermal action surface is provided in a curved region, in addition to a structure of combination of a spouting opening, a liquid pathway and an electrothermal energy converter, as disclosed in the U.S. Patents in the previous two paragraph (a linear liquid pathway or a right-angle liquid pathway). In addition, there may further be adopted a structure based on Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 59-123670 which discloses a structure in which slots in common with a plurality of electrothermal converters are used as spout sections for the electrothermal energy converters and Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 59-138461 which discloses a structure in which an opening which absorbs a pressure wave of thermal energy is designed so as to face a spout section.

Furthermore, as a recording head of a full-line type having a length corresponding to the width of the maximum sized recording medium which can be recorded in a recording apparatus, there may be adopted a structure in which the length is filled with combination of a plurality of recording heads as disclosed in the above mentioned specifications or a structure in which the length is of one recording head which is constructed as a one body.

Still furthermore, there may be adopted not only a recording head of a cartridge type to which an ink tank is mounted in one body which is described in an above described



embodiment but a recording head of a tip-type which is freely exchangeable wherein electrical connection with an apparatus body and supply of ink from the apparatus body can be secured by being implemented in the apparatus body.

- 5           The above mentioned structures of recording apparatuses are preferably added with a recovery means for a recording heads, preliminary means or the like since recording action can be more stabilized. Additional means will further be detailed below: capping means for a recording head, cleaning  
10 means, pressure or suction means, an electrothermal converter, a heating element which is different from the electrothermal energy or preliminary heating means in combination thereof, or the like means. Besides, it is also effective for stable recording that a preliminary spout mode  
15 which performs spout separately from recording is provided.

- In addition, as a recording mode of a recording apparatus, not only a recording mode using a color in main stream such as black or the like only but a recording mode of at least one of a composite color between different colors and a full  
20 color type by mixing colors can be applied to a recording apparatus with a one-body structure of a recording head or a combination of a plurality of recording heads.

- While, in the above mentioned embodiments, description is made on the premise that ink is in a liquid state, even  
25 ink which is solidified at room temperature or lower, but which is softened or liquefied at room temperature, may be

used. Besides, in an ink-jet system, since ink itself is generally controlled at temperature ranging from 30 to 70 °C to adjust a viscosity thereof to fall in a stable spout range, there may be adopted all structures in each of which  
5 ink is liquefied at a time when a recording signal is provided.

In order to positively use temperature rise caused by energy for state transition of ink from solid to liquid but to positively prevent evaporation of ink from occurring, ink which is liquefied by heating and solidified when in no  
10 heating may be used as well. In any way, the present invention can be applied to the cases of ink of a nature to be liquefied for the first time when thermal energy is conferred, such as the case where ink is liquefied by receiving thermal energy according to a recording signal and  
15 thereby liquid ink is spouted, the case where ink begins to be solidified at the time when the ink reaches a recording medium, or the like case. In such cases, ink may face an electrothermal energy converter while the ink is held as liquid or solid in recesses or through-holes on a porous sheet  
20 as described in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 54-56847 or Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 60-71260. In the present invention, the most effective means for the above mentioned various kind of ink is to execute a film boiling method.

25 Furthermore, as an embodiment of a recording apparatus according to the present invention, in addition to a

recording apparatus which is provided in one body or separately as an image output terminal of an information processing equipment such as a computer or the like, there can be named a copy apparatus in combination with a reader  
5 or the like together with a form of a facsimile apparatus which has a transmission/reception capability.

The present invention can be applied, for example, to a system configured from a plurality of devices such as a host computer, an interface unit, a reader, a printer or the  
10 like, and further can be applied, for example, to stand-alone equipment such as a copy machine, a facsimile apparatus or the like.

The present invention can be applied in the case where a storage medium in which program codes of software which  
15 realize functions of the embodiments mentioned above are recorded is supplied to a system or an apparatus and then the system or the apparatus, that is a computer (CPU or MPU), reads-out the program codes which is stored in the storage medium and executes them.

20 In this case, the program codes themselves read-out from the storage medium realize functions of the embodiments mentioned above; the storage medium in which the program codes are stored configures an aspect of the present invention.

25 As a storage medium for supplying program codes, there can be used, for example: a floppy disk, a hard disk, an

optical disk, a magneto-optic disk, a CD-ROM, a CD-R, a magnetic tape, a non-volatile memory card, an ROM or the like.

By executing program codes read-out by a computer, not only are functions of the functions of the embodiments

5 mentioned above realized, but an OS (operation system) or the like which is executed by the computer performs part or the whole of actual processing based on instructions of the program codes and by the processing, the embodiments mentioned above are realized. It is needless to say that the  
10 cases where the embodiments mentioned above are realized by executing program codes read-out by a computer are included in the scope of the present invention.

Besides, it is needless to say that the present invention also includes in the scope the case where program codes

15 read-out from a storage medium is written into a memory which is provided in a function extension board inserted in a computer or a function extension unit connected to a computer, thereafter, a CPU or the like which is provided to the function extension board or the function extension unit performs part  
20 or the whole of actual processing according to instructions of the program codes and by the processing, the functions of the embodiments are realized.

According to the present invention, as mentioned above, when recording pixels are expressed in a plurality of

25 gradations such as high/low density recording, large/small

dot recording or the like, a high quality image with no pseudo-contour is achieved by a very small load control.

The present invention is not limited to the above embodiments and various changes and modification can be made  
5 within the spirit and scope of the present invention.  
Therefor, to apprise the public of the scope of the present invention the following claims are made.

0032103:061409

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

1. A quantization method in which quantization processing is applied to data for first and second recording means which record input image data in a plurality of gradations which belong to each of different gradations in almost the same hue, comprising the steps of:

inputting multi-value level image data;

- performing quantization of the image data input for the first recording means to data with a lower level than that of the input image data (hereinafter referred to as first quantization step); and

- performing quantization of the image data input for the second recording means to data with a lower level than that of the input image data (hereinafter referred to as second quantization step), wherein at least one of the first and second quantization steps performs quantization of the input image data to multi-value data with 3 or more levels, so that the corresponding one of the first and second recording means may record the image in a plurality of gradations.

20

2. A recording apparatus which includes first and second recording means which record input image data in a plurality of gradations which belong to each of different gradations in almost the same hue, comprising:

- input means for inputting multi-value level image data;

first quantization means for performing quantization of the image data input for the first recording means to a data with a lower level than that of the input image data; and

- 5        second quantization means for performing quantization of the image data input for the second recording means to a data with a lower level than that of the input image data, wherein

- 10        the first and second recording means record the input image data respectively in first and second gradations according to a quantization result from the first quantization means, at least one of the first and second quantization means performs quantization of the input image data to multi-value data with 3 or more levels and the  
15        corresponding one of the first and second recording means record the image in a plurality of gradations.

3. The recording apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the first and second recording means record the image  
20        by an ink-jet system in which recording is effected by attaching an ink drop onto a recording medium.

4. The recording apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the first and second recording means record the image with light ink and black ink.  
25

5. The recording apparatus according to claim 4,  
wherein a size of the ink drop is controlled when the first  
and second recording means effect recording in a plurality  
of gradations.

5

6. The recording apparatus according to claim 2,  
wherein not only recording is executed by using both of the  
first and second recording means according to a level of the  
input image data, but the first and second recording means  
10 share a region in which both means effect recording while  
both raising recording levels.

7. A storage medium from which a computer can read out  
a control program which is used for performing quantization  
15 of data for first and second recording means which record  
input image data in a plurality of gradations which belong  
to each of different gradations in almost the same hue,  
comprising:

a first quantization step module for performing  
20 quantization of the image data input for the first recording  
means to data with a lower level than that of the input image  
data;

a second quantization step module for performing  
quantization of the image data input for the second recording  
25 means to data with a lower level than that of the input image  
data; and



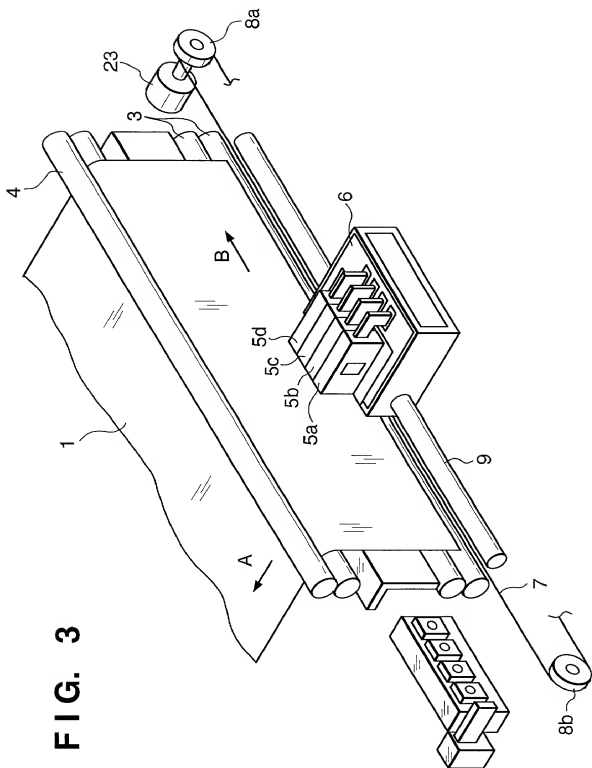
an output step module for outputting results from the first and second quantization steps, wherein one of the first and second quantization step modules perform quantization of the input image data to multi-value data with 3 or more  
5 levels so that the corresponding one of the first and second recording means may record the image in a plurality of gradations.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

When a recording apparatus can perform three gradations expression for each of a low density dot and a high density dot, and can perform recording in five gradations in total  
5 for an input data of one pixel in order to obtain a high quality image with no occurrence of a pseudo-contour by a very small load control in expressing a recording pixel in a plurality of gradations, a low density dot and a high density dot are respectively quantized to three-value data in two  
10 quantization processing sections respectively for the high density dot and the low density dot, thereby determining a recording level, while not providing five quantization processing sections for determining whether or not a dot is formed for each of the five gradations in recording.







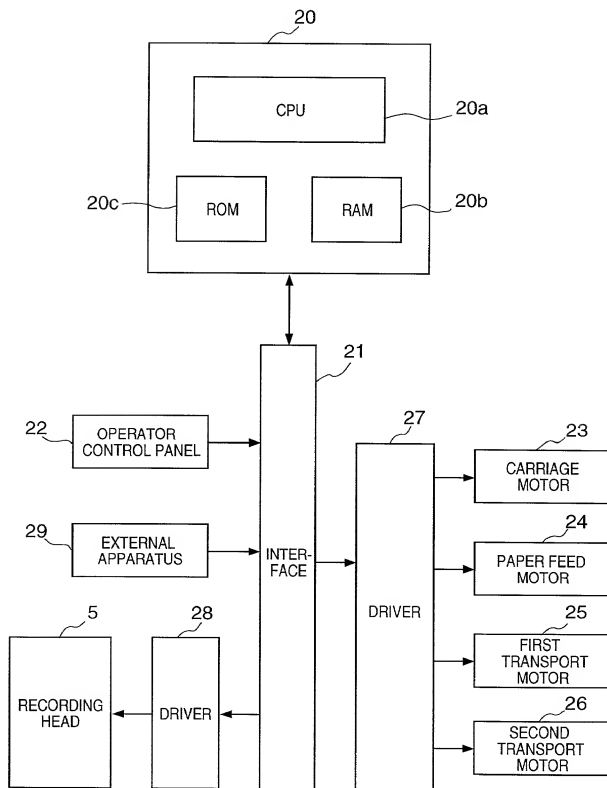
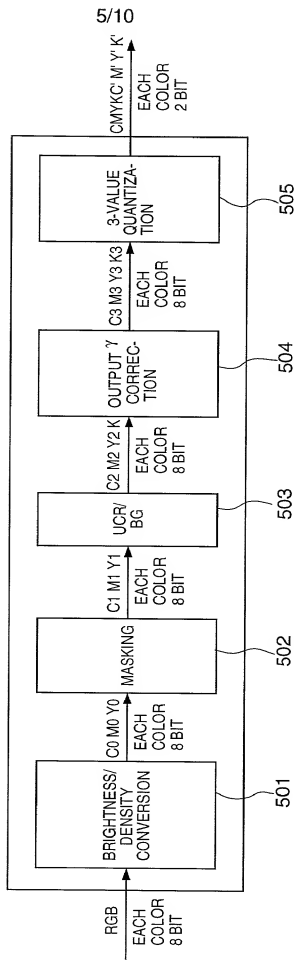
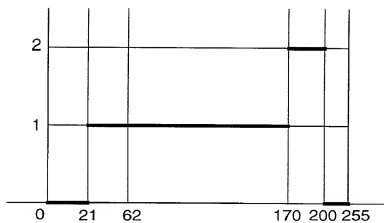
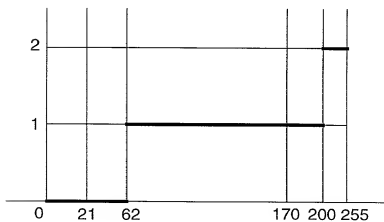
**FIG. 4**

FIG. 5



**FIG. 6A****FIG. 6B**



**FIG. 7**

KINDS OF RECORDING DOTS	REGENERATION DENSITY LEVEL
NOT PRINTING	0
LOW DENSITY DOT 1 LEVEL	43
LOW DENSITY DOT 2 LEVEL	85
HIGH DENSITY DOT 1 LEVEL	85
HIGH DENSITY DOT 2 LEVEL	255

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FIG. 8

		*	129/256
20/256	37/256	70/256	

**FIG. 9**

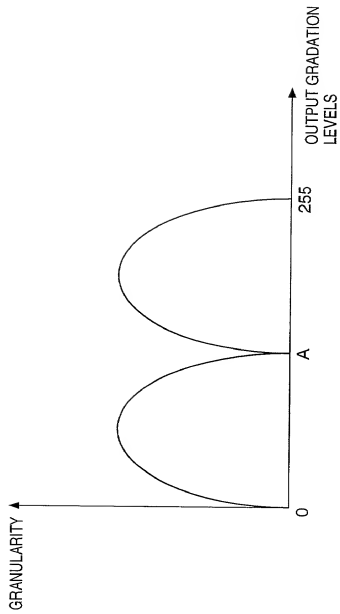
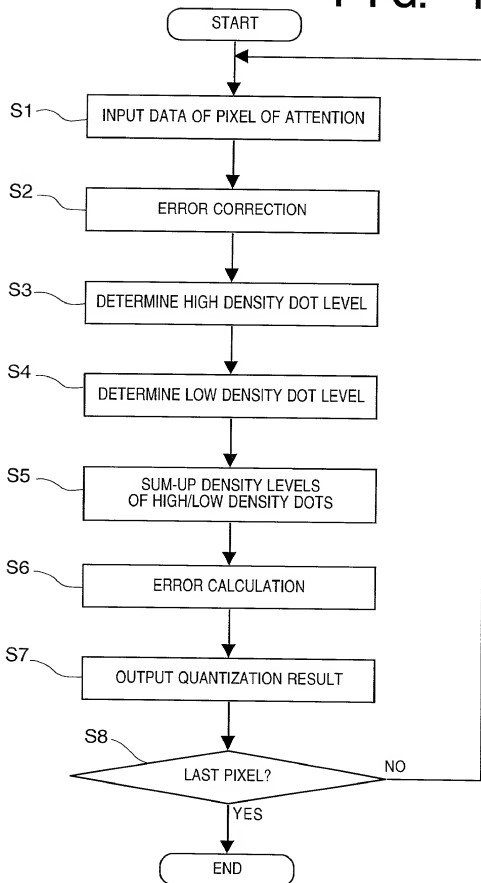


FIG. 10



CFM 1570 US  
CANON 2868

**COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY  
FOR PATENT APPLICATION**

(Page 1)

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name;

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

QUANTIZATION METHOD, AND RECORDING APPARATUS AND

STORAGE MEDIUM USING THE SAME

the specification of which [ X ] is attached hereto. [ ] was filed on \_\_\_\_\_

as United States Application No. or PCT International Application No. \_\_\_\_\_  
and was amended on \_\_\_\_\_ (if applicable).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR §1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under 35 U.S.C. §119(a)-(d) or §365(b), of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or §365(a) of any PCT international application which designates at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or PCT international application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

<u>Country</u>	<u>Application No.</u>	<u>Filed (Day/Mo./Yr.)</u>	<u>(Yes/No) Priority Claimed</u>
JAPAN	10-171401	18/06/1998	Yes

I hereby appoint the practitioners associated with the firm and customer number provided below to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith, and direct that all correspondence be addressed to the address associated with that Customer Number:

**FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO**  
**Customer Number: 05514**

**COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY  
FOR PATENT APPLICATION**  
(Page 2)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Full Name of Third Joint Inventor, if any \_\_\_\_\_  
 Third Inventor's signature : \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_ Citizen/Subject of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Residence \_\_\_\_\_  
 Post Office Address \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Fourth Joint Inventor, if any \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fourth Inventor's signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_ Citizen/Subject of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Residence \_\_\_\_\_  
 Post Office Address \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Fifth Joint Inventor, if any \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fifth Inventor's signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_ Citizen/Subject of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Residence \_\_\_\_\_  
 Post Office Address \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Sixth Joint Inventor, if any \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sixth Inventor's signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_ Citizen/Subject of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Residence \_\_\_\_\_  
 Post Office Address \_\_\_\_\_